Largest Southern Asian Adventist Church Celebrates 25 Years

May 15, 2013

World’s Largest Southern Asian Adventist Church Celebrates 25 Years

Just this weekend, Potomac Conference’s Southern Asian church (SASDAC) in Silver Spring, Md., celebrated 25 years of ministry. The church, which began with 50 members in 1988, has grown to more than 850, making it the largest Southern Asian Seventh-day Adventist church in the world, according to Franklin David, who has pastored the church since its inception.

“This weekend’s successful program evidences God’s love and kindness,” Pastor David said. “This congregation has relied on God by giving faithfully both financially and with time.”

The weekend celebration began with Friday evening vespers featuring Raj Kumar Attiken, president of the Ohio Conference, as speaker. On Sabbath Gladwin Mathews convened a special Sabbath School panel. The church service was punctuated by the colorful regalia of a parade of individuals dressed in their customary ethnic apparel to represent each of the many states of India. Veena J. Alfred, a leading lay member, organized the program. “This success of our program was due to God’s continual leading throughout and the involvement of many church members,” Alfred said.—Story by Richard Christian

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Union Communicators Discuss Moving to the Next Level

Some 30 communication leaders from throughout the Columbia Union met today at the Columbia Union Conference headquarters in Columbia, Md., for a communication advisory. Although the group generally meets annually, this was the first meeting since 2010.

Greg Kihlstrom, vice president of strategy for carousel30.com, gave a presentation in which he shared the different ways communicators can reach church members via mobile applications, responsive websites and mobile websites. This was followed by a brainstorming session where communicators talked about how they can specifically reach members who are under 35. They also shared some of the innovative ways their local churches and conferences are engaging their members and communities.

Celeste Ryan Blyden, union communication director and chair of the advisory, says her takeaway from today is that it's time to move to the next level of communication. "While we are already using every available avenue from print to email to social media, the next level is all about engaging members. It's not enough to spam news and information anymore; members want to share comments and have the opportunity to share our content within their networks."—Story by Taashi Rowe

60 Treated to Mother's Day Brunch at Takoma Park Church

Some 60 mothers were treated to a very special brunch at Potomac Conference's Takoma Park (Md.) church on Sunday. The Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington (ACSGW) sponsored the brunch specifically for single mothers while the church's Women's Ministries team prepared the meal. This was the first time that ACSGW, which is
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supported by several area churches, including the Takoma Park church, has held a brunch like this.

“We wanted to recognize single mothers because they work so hard as single parents,” explained Sheila Shilsner, ACSGW director, who has watched her own daughter struggle as a single parent.

The meal included an egg casserole, fruit salad and deli sandwiches with various spreads. The program included poetry and music. Each mother also received a rose and a special Mother’s Day card.

“I feel that we brought joy into the lives of the mothers that attended and we definitely plan on doing it again,” Schilsner said.—Story by Taashi Rowe

Allegheny East Member Named one of Maryland’s Top 100 Women

Diane Wallace Booker, a member of Allegheny East Conference’s Capitol Hill church in Washington, D.C., was recently named to The Daily Record’s Maryland Top 100 Women list. This year’s winners were honored at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore. Wallace serves as the executive director of the U.S. Dream Academy, a national nonprofit, founded by Wintley Phipps, a recording artist and former Columbia Union pastor. The organization works to provide support and mentorship to children of incarcerated parents.
NAD Regional Conference Presidents Establish Hispanic Caucus

Strong and continuous growth in their Hispanic churches have prompted the presidents of the nine regional conferences in the North American Division (NAD) to establish a Hispanic council within their caucus. In 2012 some 107 pastors in 269 congregations serving Hispanic communities baptized 1,175 souls. Current trends suggest that this figure will be surpassed in 2013. At the present time, 19,000 Hispanic members comprise more than 6 percent of the membership in the regional work.

During a meeting of Spanish language coordinators and regional presidents held at Oakwood University (Ala.) the regional presidents officially voted to establish the NAD Regional Hispanic Advisory. The council will be composed of the Spanish language director, coordinator or vice president in each conference, working under the chairman of the regional caucus. Regional conferences were established by the General Conference in 1945 to serve the predominantly African-American populations centered in mostly urban areas within local union conferences. Today the regional conference membership stands at nearly 320,000 members.—Reprinted from the Atlantic Union Gleaner FYI

Pennsylvania's Little Church Builds Churches

Although Pennsylvania’s New Brighton church has seen its membership decline over the years, several members are finding a way to make an impact abroad. After several members of the church saw a program about Maranatha Volunteers International’s “One Day Churches,” the Sabbath School class decided to raise funds for a one day church. Money started to come in. Before they knew it they raised money for a church that can be built in one day. They have been collecting money for these churches now for the past two years and have helped to build four churches in Malawi, Brazil and Ecuador.
“As their pastor I am very proud of them,” shared Dennis Austin. “They could have very easily given up, closed their doors and watched 3ABN or Hope TV at home, but they have gathered together to help build and grow the church, even if it isn’t in their town.”—Story by Dennis Austin/MiPaconferenceNews

25 Baptized Into Cleveland Churches

Some 25 people were baptized last month into Ohio Conference’s Hispanic churches in Cleveland. Under the leadership of Pastor Peter Simpson, two people were baptized into the Willard Spanish group, two into the newly founded East Side group, four into the Ebenezer Hispanic church and 17 into the Cleveland First Spanish church.

The baptisms occurred on a Sabbath afternoon between songs, testimonies and tears of joy. The new members were then welcomed by more than 200 of their brothers and sisters. Pastor Oswaldo Magaña, conference Ministerial secretary and Hispanic Ministries director also helped to officiate. Pictured are Pastors Simpson and Magaña baptizing two new members.

La luz del Evangelio vuelve a brillar en Cleveland

El pasado 20 de abril una poderosa luz celestial brilló sobre las congregaciones del distrito hispano de Cleveland a cargo del Pr. Peter Simpson, cuando 25 almas fueron bautizadas producto del trabajo y el
esfuerzo que estas congregaciones han venido manteniendo desde inicios de año cuando el pastor Simpson y el grupo de ancianos organizaron y lanzaron el programa de crecimiento integral denominado "Grupos Pequeños" 2 almas del grupo hispano de Willard, 2 almas de la recién fundada compañía empresa del East Side, 4 almas de la iglesia hispana de Ebenezer y 17 almas de la Primera Iglesia Hispana de Cleveland Cleveland Español 1st SDA Iglesia, hicieron de la tarde del 20 de abril una tarde sencillamente inolvidable... entre cantos, testimonios, aplausos y hasta lagrimas de gozo y felicidad, los nuevos miembros fueron recibidos por mas de 200 hermanos que asistieron y se unieron al "gozo que hay en los cielos cuando un pecador se arrepiente". En el evento también estuvo presente la Conferencia de Ohio representada por el Pr. Oswaldo Magaña, Secretario Ministerial y Director de Ministerios Hispano quien fue uno de los pastores oficiantes.

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**Washington Adventist Hospital Recognized for High-Quality Heart Attack Care**

The [Washington Adventist Hospital](http://www.wah.org) (WAH) in Takoma Park, Md., recently achieved an important first in Maryland by being recognized nationally for the efficient, effective and rapid treatment of patients suffering from a heart attack, the leading cause of death in the United States.

The hospital was the first in the state to achieve accreditation as a Cycle IV Chest Pain Center with PCI (percutaneous coronary intervention, or angioplasty) from the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care (SCPC). A Cycle IV accreditation is
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Currently the highest offered by the SCPC, and emphasizes the importance of standardized diagnostic and treatment programs used in the treatment of patients with chest pain and other heart attack symptoms.

“I’m very proud of the physicians and staff that are part of our emergency and cardiac teams, and I thank them for their diligence delivering high-quality and compassionate care to their patients,” said Joyce Newmyer, the hospital’s president.—Story by Diana Troese

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100-Plus Attend Capital Memorial’s Vegan Cooking Show

Potomac’s Capital Memorial church (CMC) in Washington, D.C., recently hosted a free, vegan cooking demonstration featuring celebrity chef Mark Anthony. The 114 attendees—both from the community and members of CMC—also had a
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chance to sample spicy, chili tacos filled with textured vegetable protein and tasty fried gluten. Anthony shared his own weight-loss history and his story of leaving a high-paying career as a chef for the “rich and famous” to travel to every state in the country making these presentations. While Anthony doesn’t charge attendees a fee, his expenses were covered by the church and free-will donations.

In addition to Anthony’s cooking demonstration, John Kelly, MD, a lifestyle medicine specialist for the Potomac Adventist Health Food Store’s Living Well/Complete Health Improvement Program in Silver Spring, Md., shared how a vegan diet can reverse multiple diseases.

Surendra Paul Gill, CMC’s Health Ministries leader, said his team organized the program “to share with our church family and community a message of health and hope for a better life!”—Story by Jacquie Bokow

Hagerstown Members Get Help Distributing 3,500 Books

A large group of literature evangelists attending meetings at the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Md., recently helped Chesapeake Conference’s Hagerstown church members get closer to their evangelism goals. The church has set a goal of leaving a copy of The Great Hope in every one of the 38,000 homes in their city. In a little more than one hour on a recent Sabbath afternoon, the combined group of 120 laymen and colporteurs distributed 3,500 books.

Member Jolene Thomas says her group accidentally started working several blocks away from the assigned area on their map. They were getting back in the van to move to the correct
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territory when Thomas spotted a passing woman and went to hand her a book. When the woman saw the word “hope” on the cover, she said, “I really need this today. My son tried to commit suicide this morning.” The van passengers gathered around her for prayer and arranged to meet with her again. “We were in the wrong place,” says Thomas, “but it ended up being the right place in God’s plan.” Pictured is literature evangelist Italo Opazo from Texas sharing a copy of the book with Hagerstown resident Robert Bowers.—Story by Kim Peckham

Chesapeake Pastor Receives Church Press Award

Rajkumar Dixit, an associate pastor at Chesapeake Conference’s New Hope church in Fulton, Md., recently won an award of merit for reporting and writing from the Associated Church Press’ (ACP) convention in Indianapolis, Ind. He won the award for his monthly column, “The Connected Church” that he writes for the Canadian Messenger magazine.

“It is an honor to be recognized,” Dixit says. “The purpose of the column is to train and encourage members and pastors to reach out to the community that surrounds them by using innovative methods.”

Founded in 1916, ACP is the oldest interdenominational religious press association in North America. Nearly 200 publications, websites, news services and individuals are ACP members.
Prove It With Pictures

Pierre Walters, a member of Potomac’s Takoma Park (Md.) church and director/producer of Columbia Union Story videos, recently wrote a new book called Prove It With Pictures. Find out more below:

Q: What's the book about? Who is it for?

A: The book is written for small businesses, leaders and artists who are interested in engaging with their audience and building their brand. Working with artists, leaders and church organizations has helped me to understand just how powerful a community-driven brand can be.

Q: How can churches and their members use this book to help further brand their churches and church organizations?

A: Through the effectiveness of video, the empowerment of community and the ongoing dialogue of an engaged presence, we can reach out and hug those who’d rather experience Jesus than simply hear about Him.

Q: How can readers get a copy of the book?

A: The book is available for purchase as an e-book at major online retailers like Google Play, Scribd, Barnes and Noble, etc.

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Congratulations to the Visitor Calendar Contest
Winners

Earlier this year, the Visitor magazine, held a contest challenging readers to name all the animals in the 2013 Visitor Calendar. There were two sets of winners: sisters Alicya McDowell, 8 years old; Asiya McDowell, 6 years old; and Alicia McDowell, 2 years old were the first to respond. The sisters (pictured) attend Potomac Conference’s Hampton Roads (Va.) church.

The second winner is also a Potomac member. Elizabeth You, a member of the Chesapeake (Va.) church also correctly guessed all the names of the animals in the calendar. We extend our congratulations to the winners and will be mailing them a special gift.

Columbia Union Members in the News

Vine Haven students help community

Adventist HealthCare Moves Corporate Office To Gaithersburg

Adventist Community Services Class Connects Chinese Students to Computers
UPCOMING EVENTS

Click here for a complete listing of upcoming events around the Columbia Union Conference.

MARYLAND

May 18: The Restoration Praise Center is hosting a Health Awareness Day. Expect free consults from dentists, OB/GYN, chiropractors and other health care providers. Get on the premiere health plan, receive cooking tips that will revitalize your body, learn how to grow your own foods in your home, get tips on natural skin and hair care, etc. For more information, please contact Hashina at healthministries@rpcsda.org. The church is located at 10411 Greenbelt Road in Lanham, Md.

May 19: Frederick Adventist School is hosting its annual golf tournament, luncheon and fundraising auction at the Hollow Creek Golf Club. Golfers register at 8 a.m. with a grab-n-go breakfast; the luncheon/auction preview opens at 11 a.m. with demonstrations and samples from all kinds of vendors. For more information contact bkhorman@msn.com or call (301) 663-0363.

May 19: Celebrate 40 years with the Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md. The church is celebrating its 40th year of existence with a series of exciting events throughout 2013. The first of these is a 5k walk/run for the entire family on Sunday, May 19. Everyone is welcome to come and run or walk. They are also looking for volunteers to help on race day. To register for the race, sign up to volunteer or get more information, visit www.metrosda.org/5k.

May 25: The Seabrook church is hosting an international weekend. There will be a Parade Of Nations at 11 a.m. divine service. An International Choir Fest begins at 5 p.m. Sunday, May 26th there will be an international business expo at 11 a.m. The church is located at 8900 Good Luck Road in Lanham, Md.

NEW JERSEY

June 2: Sapphire Throne Media is presenting a one-day camp meeting and revival at the Robbinsville (N.J.) church. Registration is necessary, and the registration deadline is May 26. There will be eight different seminars from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch is provided). Topics include “Your Creation Armor,” “The Successful Family,” “Supercharged Health,” “Evangelism made Easy,” “Disaster and our Response,” “Ellen White’s Dreams and Visions Campaign” and “The Elijah Message and The Prophetic View.” For registration details, download the camp meeting flyer at SapphireThroneMedia.com, or email eric@SapphireThroneMedia.com.

OHIO

May 17-19: Attention MEN. Looking for a non-traditional weekend where you can engage in
spiritual discussions from a totally male perspective, work outdoors, and have a little down
time? The Ohio Conference is hosting a men’s weekend, at Camp Mohaven in Danville. Click
here to learn more.

PENSYLVANNIA
May 31-June 2: The Allegheny East Conference is hosting two-day workshop on how to
raise money and other resources for local ministries and hear about innovative outreach
ministries that can be replicated in your area. There will also be a full disaster response
training with the train the trainer and leadership modules. Joe and Sherry Watts, North
American Division’s Adventist Community Services Disaster Response leaders will lead the
training. The weekend training will begin at 1 p.m. on Friday, May 31st and end at noon on
June 2nd. Click here [http://www.visitaec.org/article/37/ministries/adventist-community-
services-department] to learn more and to register.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
May 19: Capital Memorial church is hosting their 21st International Vegetarian Food
Fair. Guests will have access to an unlimited “sampling” of authentic vegetarian cuisines from
some 50 countries. The entry fee is $15, for seniors (60 and older) it’s $10 and for kids 10
and younger, it’s FREE!. There is also a discount for seniors. All items will be vegetarian;
those, which are vegan will be noted. There is free parking or take Metro Red Line; four
blocks north of Van Ness-UDC and two blocks east of Connecticut Ave. Doors will be open
from 1-4 p.m., food will stop being served at 4:30 p.m. The church is located at
3150 Chesapeake Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C.

WEST VIRGINIA
May 17-19: The Voice of Prophecy and Mountain View conference are hosting a
Discover Bible School training weekend. During this three-day session, attendees will learn
about prayer and soul-winning, how to give a Bible study and how to obtain decisions in a
Bible study. For more information, or to sign up, contact the conference office at (304-422-
4581) and ask for Valerie Morikone. Registration ends April 30.

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Franklin David, senior pastor for the Southern Asian church, stands with Ralph Martin, who was president of the Potomac Conference when the church was established.

Just this weekend, Potomac Conference’s Southern Asian church (SASDAC) in Silver Spring, Md., celebrated 25 years of ministry. The church, which began with 50 members in 1988, has grown to more than 850 making it the largest Southern Asian Seventh-day Adventist church in the world, according to Franklin David, who has pastored the church since its inception. “This weekend was another highpoint for our congregation,” said Pastor David. “This weekend’s successful program evidences God’s love and kindness. This congregation has relied on God by giving faithfully both financially and with time.” Until recently, David was the only pastor for over 600 members in addition to ministering to the Indian community in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The weekend celebration began with Friday evening vespers featuring Raj Kumar Attiken, president of the Ohio Conference, as speaker. On Sabbath Gladwin Mathews convened a special Sabbath School program panel. The church service was punctuated by the colorful regalia of a parade of ethnic diversity as individuals dressed in their customary ethnic apparel to represent each of the many states of India. Veena J. Alfred, a leading lay member, organized the program. “This success of our program was due to God’s continual leading throughout and the involvement of many church members,” Alfred said.

Bill Miller, Potomac Conference president, presented an inspirational sermon for the divine worship service, which was followed by fellowship lunch with a menu of exotic traditional Indian cooking. The afternoon program was another spiritual highpoint. “We were blessed by a special blend of local Indian talent and Vijay Benedict, a former Bollywood singer and a devout Christian today, who traveled from India to perform at this program,” said John Varghese, head elder. “His rousing style and personal testimony was a moving tribute to the
power of the Holy Spirit. After Sabbath at 8:30 p.m., a social program ... showcased talent from a wide range of local performers who showed the incredible talent that God has given His people.” For the first 15 years of its existence, the Southern Asian church rented two nearby churches, and in 2006, after a vigorous building project, moved into their home at 2001 East Randolph Road in Silver Spring. The location next to the General Conference headquarters was an answer to prayer. Once the land was acquired, the financial challenge of raising capital for the building program seemed insurmountable. Once again, prayer was the answer. To expand their ministry even more, SASDAC has planted a sister church in Herndon, Va. “While the primary focus has been on Southern Asian Indians, SASDAC provides a home to people of a wide range of ethnic backgrounds,” said Varghese. “This is a congregation largely made up of first generation Indo–American immigrants. God has created something special here, especially for the young people. They have been presented with unique leadership opportunities previously unavailable.” According to the church’s leaders, the weekend celebration is the beginning of a legacy of Seventh–day–Adventist ethnic Indian church growth in North America. They believe that when average people reach out to God and put their trust and faith in Him, they accomplish things that are extraordinary.

**COMMENTS POLICY:** The Columbia Union Conference Visitor encourages quality conversation and welcomes your thoughtful comments. All comments are subject to approval but will not be edited.

**Please limit your comments to 500 words or less. Only one comment per person will be published.**
The Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH) in Takoma Park, Md., recently achieved an important first in Maryland by being recognized nationally for the efficient, effective and rapid treatment of patients suffering from a heart attack, the leading cause of death in the United States.

Each year, more than 600,000 Americans die from heart disease, making it the leading cause of death in the U.S. In addition, more than 5 million people visit hospitals in the United States each year with chest pain.

The hospital was the first in the state to achieve accreditation as a Cycle IV Chest Pain Center with PCI (percutaneous coronary intervention, or angioplasty) from the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care (SCPC). A Cycle IV accreditation is currently the highest offered by the SCPC, and emphasizes the importance of standardized diagnostic and treatment programs used in the treatment of patients with chest pain and other heart attack
This accreditation recognizes our comprehensive team approach as well as the innovative and high-quality care delivered to heart attack patients at Washington Adventist Hospital,” said Joyce Newmyer, the hospital’s president. “I’m very proud of the physicians and staff that are part of our emergency and cardiac teams, and I thank them for their diligence delivering high-quality and compassionate care to their patients.”

To achieve accreditation as a Cycle IV Chest Pain Center with PCI, WAH demonstrated its high level of expertise in dealing with patients who arrive with symptoms of a heart attack. WAH completed a rigorous evaluation by SCPC to appraise its assessment, diagnosis and treatment of patients presenting with symptoms of a heart attack. The accreditation recognizes the use of more efficient and effective evaluations as well as more appropriate and rapid treatment for patients with heart attack symptoms.

To the community served by Washington Adventist Hospital, this means that processes are in place that meet strict criteria aimed at:

- Reducing the time from onset of symptoms to diagnosis and treatment
- Treating patients more quickly during the critical window of time when the integrity of the heart muscle can be preserved
- Monitoring patients when it is not certain that they are having a heart attack to ensure that they are not sent home too quickly or needlessly admitted to the hospital

“Being an accredited chest pain center recognizes the ongoing collaboration between our Emergency Department, cardiology team, emergency medical service providers, hospitalists and nurses,” said Vincent Hayes, MD, medical director of the hospital’s Chest Pain Center. “Our team has processes in place that ensure rapid assessment and expedited life-saving treatment to each patient who comes to our hospital with chest pain.”

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Pierre Walters, a member of Potomac Conference’s Takoma Park (Md.) church and director/producer of Columbia Union Story videos, recently wrote a new book called Prove It With Pictures. While the book is not explicitly spiritual, Walters says it can help pastors and their members find ways to connect to their community.

Q: What’s the book about? Who is it for?

A: The book is written for small businesses, leaders and artists who are interested in engaging with their audience and building their brand. My background working with artists, leaders, and church organizations has helped me to understand just how powerful a community-driven brand can be. Through this book, I would like to share what I’ve learned over the past six years to help like-minded entrepreneurs discover a new path to relevancy.

Q: Why did you write it?

A: I wrote this book to address many of the questions I frequently receive from collaborators, clients, and peers regarding the value of video. Our culture is a “prove it” culture. It’s important to us to know how services are rated and reviewed, whether or not products are endorsed or ignored, and that we are making informed decisions when we vote with our wallets.

Q: How can churches and church members use this book to help further brand their churches and church organizations?

A: I really believe that our church has a very special message from God for the world. Striving to reach more and more people for Jesus, our church has learned and developed expertise in many areas—leading the way for others in communication, presentation, branding and delivery. Prove It with Pictures can help churches and ministries at the community level to discover ways to better engage with the unchurched who surround them. Through the effectiveness of video, the empowerment of community and the ongoing dialogue of an engaged presence, we can reach out and hug those who’d rather experience Jesus than simply hear about Him.

Q: How can readers get a copy of the book?

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Q: How can readers get a copy of the book?

Vine Haven students help community

Since Vine Haven Adventist School opened its doors at 1155 E. Landis Ave., in Vineland, last August, students in kindergarten through ninth grade have been hard at work, not only on academics, but on community service and activities as well.

Some examples of community service and activities are:

• Music director Lilia Torres led the Vine Haven String Orchestra in performances within the community. Student Praise Team vocalists joined the orchestra in performing at the Cumberland Mall for holiday shoppers and at Vineland City Hall for a special Three Kings Day performance. Students also often perform upon request for constituent churches. They also performed for a K-12 Board Meeting in the New Jersey Conference Education Office in Trenton and traveled to a music festival at Blue Mountain Academy in Hamburg, Pa., for a performance.

• Catherine Tomlinson, principal and fine and performing arts director, led students in a musical, “No Phibbin Mephibosheth,” which was performed in the Vine Haven Chapel located at the same address.

• Students, under Tomlinson’s direction, created pillows for pediatric patients at Inspira Medical Center Vineland.

• Vineland police, fire and emergency medical personnel were recently invited to visit the school for a breakfast to honor them for their service. This event also offered an opportunity for the students to meet these security professionals, face-to-face, to provide greater insight as to who they are and to recognize their level of commitment to the community.

“It’s important for students to consider the needs and joy of others before their own,” said Tomlinson. “Vine Haven students are challenged to complete 50 or more hours of Christian Service each year.” She added, “Remaining actively involved in such activities is a service we enjoy.”
Adventist HealthCare Moves Corporate Office To Gaithersburg

City contributed $160,000 in economic development grant funding to help with renovations
By Greg Cohen  Email the author  April 23, 2013

For the first time since 1996, Adventist HealthCare calls somewhere other than Rockville its home. 

Adventist HealthCare, the largest health system in Montgomery County, completed the move of its corporate office to Gaithersburg, according to a news release.

The new location is at 820 W. Diamond Ave., in a building just off I-270 and Clopper Road, across from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Adventist announced. The new building allows the organization to improve office space for its approximately 300 employees and realize savings on its current lease.

Gaithersburg contributed $160,000 in economic development grant funding to help with renovations at the new location, and Tuesday marked Adventist HealthCare day in the city.

Adventist President and CEO William G. "Bill" Robertson was appreciative of Gaithersburg's contribution.

"Adventist HealthCare is very thankful for Gaithersburg's support," Robertson said in a statement. "We have enjoyed collaborating with the city on many projects for more than 30 years and we look forward to continuing that partnership in the future."
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Standing before a packed room of students, Kai Jin Li held up a camera and took out the memory card.

Speaking in rapid-fire Mandarin Chinese, Li uploaded the photos on a computer and projected the images on the classroom wall as about 15 attentive faces looked on.

For these students — who are age 60 and older — 76-year-old Li has become a gateway to computer knowledge through a shared native language.

For about 10 weeks, Li, of Silver Spring, has taught the weekly, two-hour computer classes in Mandarin, an unusual opportunity in the area that drew enough people to fill the small classroom on Friday at Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington in Silver Spring.

About 20 students are registered for a class covering basic computer knowledge and skills — including how to use a mouse, how to set up an email account and an explanation of the Internet — that Li said are necessary in modern society.

“He feels very glad that he can be a little bit help to those senior people because they don’t have knowledge about using computer, but nowadays, you really need a computer to do some basic things, like having an email account, so you can communicate more easily,” Li said through Hongfeng Shen, a volunteer with Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington, who served as an interview translator.

For students with varying limitations in their English-speaking abilities, the class is the only place Li said he knows where they can familiarize themselves with modern technology in Mandarin.

Li taught with confidence at the recent class, speaking animatedly and fielding questions, even though the content of his class is fairly new to him, as well.

“He himself is still learning computers. He’s a chemical engineer,” Shen said of Li. “He’s actually learning computers and then teaching computers.”

In Qingdao, China, where he also lived, Li conducted research for about 30 years on topics such as rocket fuel and a silicon gel-like product. He also would occasionally serve as a substitute teacher for middle school students at the company’s school.

Li retired in China before he moved to the U.S. with his wife in 2006 to join his daughter and son.

Yet, after living in the U.S. a while, he said, he was motivated to give back somehow.

“Once he got here, the government had given him a lot of benefits ... so he just feel that we didn’t make any contributions to this society, but they give us so good benefit, so he just feel obligated to make contributions if he can,” Shen said, translating for Li.

Li would find guidance from the Jewish Council for the Aging, an organization that, in part, offers a training program for low-income, unemployed Montgomery County residents age 55 and older.

Quintin Doromal, director of the organization’s senior employment programs, said the organization works to place seniors at nonprofit organizations and local government agencies for training that lets them learn new skills or sharpen old ones.

Doromal said Li’s placement at Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington was “serendipitous.”

“We didn’t anticipate that he would start a class there,” Doromal said.

Li’s work with the organization initially involved relatively simple computer maintenance at its Silver Spring building, where computer classes already were taught in English and Spanish.
About two weeks after he started, Li told Kevin Ferguson — the organization’s director of education — that he was interested in teaching a computer class in Mandarin for seniors, “particularly because there is a huge want within his own community to learn technology,” Ferguson said.

Li’s class was met with enthusiasm from the start, Ferguson said.

“We were flooded. It was absolutely amazing,” he said of Li’s first class.

Some students have followed Li to Silver Spring after taking informal classes from him in Wheaton, Li said.

Learning in Mandarin is important for these students, Ferguson said, because some are unlikely to learn English.

Some have reached an age where it’s difficult for them to learn a new language, he said. Others associate learning a new language with the possibility of losing their native language and thus “giving up a cultural part of themselves,” Ferguson said.

Ferguson said Li transforms when he takes on his teaching role.

“When he’s in the class, I see a teenager,” he said. “Everybody has their super power. This is his.”

Li said he is learning from a variety of sources, including a technology class and a class that teaches Microsoft Word, and selects parts of these lessons to pass to his students in a fun, interesting way.

Before the Friday class, Li demonstrated an online game that teaches one how to use a mouse by clicking on a moving picture of a squirrel.

Karen Wang of Silver Spring said she has enjoyed playing the games Li includes as she learns and practices basic computer knowledge.

“As we are getting older and older, so easy to forget,” she said.

Wang said she could take a computer class taught in English, but decided to take advantage of the class for Mandarin speakers.

For Licun Wang — who is not related to Karen Wang — the class marked his introduction to computer knowledge.

Wang said through a translator that he wants to know his way around a computer, so he can communicate and look up news, literature, directions and more on the Internet.

Wang, who moved to the U.S. from China about 11 years ago, said he does not think he knows English well enough to ask questions in a class taught in English, and is grateful for Li’s class.

He said Li is “very patient” and, because he is learning about computers himself, serves as an example for the students.

Though Li spoke in Mandarin during an interview, it is clear from animated hand gestures and the tone of his voice that he does indeed — as Shen later translates — enjoy teaching the class.

“He’s basically not just teaching them,” Shen said. “He’s actually using the computer together with them.”

“He thinks himself that it’s not a relation between a teacher and the student but we’re all the participant,” Shen said.

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Upcoming Events Around the Columbia Union

NATIONAL
September 1: Enter the 2014 “Forever Faithful” International Camporee theme songwriting contest by September 1. Click here to enter the contest. If your submission is chosen, you could win two free tickets to the camporee and the honor of having your music become the 2014 Forever Faithful International Camporee official theme song. For more information, contact Justin Yang or Stacy-Ann Thomas.

NEW JERSEY
April 26-28: Trinity Temple Academy’s alumni, family and friends are invited to celebrate the academy’s 80th anniversary during this year’s alumni weekend. Organizers will be celebrating and honoring classmates and graduates, presenting alumni awards and rededicating themselves to the future of the school. The weekend begins at the school with a meet and greet with guest speaker and alumnus Pastor Marvin McLean. On Sabbath Pastor Ronald Reeves, an alumnus, will speak for the divine service at Trinity Temple, which is located in Hillside, N.J. Saturday night’s event, called “The Celebration of Trinity Temple Academy,” will take place at the Pantagis Renaissance featuring guest speaker Pastor S. Peter Campbell and performances by a live band. On Sunday there will be a special alumni brunch at Trinity Temple, 11 to 2 p.m. For more information, visit trinitytempleacademy.com.